

“PROTECTION TO BRITISH INDUSTRY”

CONSIDERED,

AS IT WAS REPRESENTED

AT AN

ENTERTAINMENT,

PERFORMED AT

THE COURT HOUSE, WARWICK,

ON

THE 14TH OF JANUARY, 1850:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE
CONDITION AND TREATMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL-
LABOURING CLASS.

BY

BARNABY BREAKBREAD.

WARWICK:

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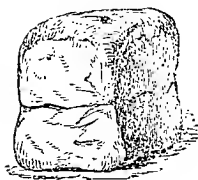
TO
THE CONSUMERS, OF ALL CLASSES,

FROM

THE HIGHEST TO THE LOWEST,

WHO ARE DESIRED TO

“Look here, upon this picture, and on this,”



4 lbs. for 4d.



2 lbs. for 5d.

“The counterfeit presentment of two brothers :”

“And what judgment

Would step from this to this ?”

HAMLET.

THESE CRUMBS

ARE DEDICATED

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

B. B.

“PROTECTION,” &c.

The season dull, the markets flat, and the prospects of affairs generally in their eyes gloomy, “the friends of Protection to British Industry” bethought them of a plan for enlivening the scene and exhilarating themselves, and accordingly resolved to have a gathering, “as a means of giving expression to the feelings entertained by the friends of Protection to British Industry, in this county, in favour of the introduction, in the ensuing Session of Parliament, of measures calculated to mitigate the evil of the existing free-trade laws ;” and, lest the “expression of their feelings” should be exposed to the nipping blasts of winter, to the cutting breath of criticism, or to the rude violence of opposition at an open meeting, it was wisely determined to seek protection within the comfortable walls of the Court House, and to nourish their patriotism with such good things as their desperate circumstances would decently permit them to indulge in. Now, this latter, to a plain man unaccustomed to such things, appears to have been a most sensible resolve, and some may even look upon it as the most sensible part of the whole proceedings. A din-

ner was provided, or, as the papers say, "covers were laid," for one hundred and sixty persons, at the small charge of twelve shillings each, in the great room ; and it is credibly stated that numbers of hungry applicants for tickets were refused from want of accommodation ; and that a party of sixty were likewise fed at the same cost in the Mayor's parlour, which, it is supposed, is a loose box provided and kept for all sorts of odd purposes. No one can reasonably object to the friends of British Industry spending twelve shillings upon one dinner ; indeed, it is a comfort to observe them on such an occasion, and under such distressing circumstances as they allege themselves to be, so able to indulge in and enjoy, in an innocent way, the creature-comforts of life. But, whilst they were thus refreshing and cheering themselves with the good things which a beneficent Providence has abundantly distributed over the world, it does seem somewhat strange and irreconcilable with their professions of an earnest desire to benefit by their proceedings all classes of the community, that they should not only most ungratefully forget the fact of their being indebted, in a great degree, to the remission of duties upon colonial and foreign produce for the great variety and high quality of the repast before them, and for the cheapness thereof ; but it is also strange that such indulgence and enjoyment should precede, and, as it were, prepare their minds for the business of the meeting—the advocacy of measures for restricting and making costly the ordinary subsistence of all those labouring millions

whose hands are hardened in the daily toil of "British Industry," but whose hearts are softened in humble thankfulness for the abundance which has been recently spread before them in an almost universally productive harvest, in the fruition of which a wise and humane Legislature has enabled them to partake. Of whom did this patriotic and disinterested party consist ? It is observed, the majority of the Committee committed themselves no further than by lending their names to the programme ; at least they were absent from the dinner ; and excuses from some of them were communicated, through the Chairman, to the meeting. The Lord Lieutenant, and one of the noble Members for the County, the Hon. Chairman, and another Hon. form the aristocratic portion of those present ; then come the Hon. Members for the Northern Division ; but neither of the Members for the County Town, nor for Birmingham, nor Coventry, were there. There were some half-dozen of the Clergy, about as many again of Squires of various degrees, an average of Attornies, Land Agents, Stewards, and other dependants upon the Landed Interest, with a fair sprinkling of Innkeepers, Wine Merchants, Butchers, Tailors, Hairdressers, Auctioneers, Veterinary Surgeons, and others belonging to the town, and more or less connected with, and dependent upon the patronage of, the same interest ; and the remainder of the party was composed of genuine live farmers. Of this latter and most interested class, the majority of the neighbourhood, notwithstanding all the arts of coaxing,

cajoling, and terrifying to induce or compel them to attend or take an interest in the proceedings, appear to be very indifferent, and even suspicious, not only of the impossibility of success in such a cause, but of the sincerity of the chief promoters, and that their own prosperity would be far better promoted by spending their time and money at home in attention to business.

Having disposed of the good cheer laid in great variety and profusion before them, and the odd sixty having been trotted up and accommodated in a room previously filled by one hundred and sixty, the business of the meeting commenced with the customary loyal and one or two routine toasts, to the latter of which some of the company responded, whose speeches do not require particular observation, further than a passing word upon that of the Rev. Gentleman who represented the "Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese," and who seemed to entertain a secret suspicion that he and his reverend brethren present were somewhat out of place when he said "for it was not fitting for clergymen to be mixed up with political matters," (very sound doctrine) "though, at the same time, he did not think he was exhibiting any political feeling when he was expressing his conviction of a measure which affected the welfare of all with whom he was acquainted ;" and, "he believed the clergy themselves would be great sufferers." And, the objectionable measure is that which has, under the blessing of Providence, "filled the hun-

gry with good things," without sending the rich "empty away;" in opposition to which, these gentlemen feel themselves called upon to step forward, though ministers of a religion ever mindful of the poor and needy, and inculcating this tenet, "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him, but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it;" which is plainly and strictly applicable to any measure, private or public, having for its object the making scarce or costly the chief subsistence of the people. How many were there, during the late scarcity, who withheld from the market their corn, in expectation of receiving 100s. per quarter, when thousands were suffering under the agony of extreme privation, and even perishing from want of food? But the clergy anticipate a lowering of the averages, and, consequently, they will be "great sufferers," and it becomes, therefore, their duty to attend such meetings, and look after "the interests of the Church!" Supposing even their incomes will ultimately and permanently be reduced, which is by no means admitted, and supposing such reduction to exceed, in some degree, their necessary expenditure, likewise reduced by the diminished cost of all the ordinary requirements, and also of the luxuries of life; might it not be expected, as ministers of a self-denying religion, that they should stand up conspicuous examples for the encouragement of those humble and self-abasing virtues which they are required to preach, and exhort others to practice, and which, I firmly believe, a considerable number of their clerical brethren are not only prepared to do, but are actually performing?

By the bye, it is remarked, in reference to the once-exciting toast, "the Army," and "the Navy," that they are frequently, now-a-days, clubbed together, and the name of "the Duke" is no longer associated with the former, as was the custom previous to his conversion from free-trade in swords and bayonets, to that of corn, and other means of supporting rather than destroying life.

Some little difficulty, it would appear, had arisen as to who should be the presiding chairman, and some disappointment experienced, or it had not been fully arranged that the chairman should propose *ex cathedra*, the first special, indeed the chief, toast of the evening—"Protection to British Industry;" for, it is observed, the Hon. Chairman intimated, in the beginning of his speech, that "he was, almost up to that moment, totally unacquainted with the fact that he should be called upon to speak on this subject," (in fully believing which the speech itself, as reported, presents no difficulty,) and the selection of that gentleman for the important function of setting off the results of free-trade in all their hideous deformity, is somewhat remarkable, and to the cause somewhat infelicitous; inasmuch as one of his station could scarcely be found, in the Southern Division of the county, who has spent less time at home, so as to enable him thoroughly to understand the circumstances and requirements of an English tenantry and peasantry, or who has had less opportunity of becoming acquainted with the condition and relative position of the several classes of the community, as

they stand at the present time—a position very different to that which they occupied a century, a half century, or even a quarter of a century gone by—which is fully manifested in the manner and substance of his observations. The leading features of the speech are three, two of which are the ready-made staple commodity met with in all orations of this kind, viz., Mr. Cobden and Sir Robert Peel ; and the third, forming a pleasing variety, Lord Palmerston and his foreign policy ; the connexion of which with free-trade or British industry is by no means so patent as the concealed political-party motive partially unveiled by the introduction of this latter topic. One singular inconsistency in this speech must not escape unnoticed, and it may be conveniently referred to in connexion with the first slap at Mr. Cobden, whom the speaker accused of having held out “specious promises which, without exception, had been proved fallacious and void ;” the first of which was, “and he begged they would mark this fact in particular, that the rents of landlords, under free-trade, should be at least as high as under monopoly ;” and immediately afterwards he, the Chairman, asked his audience whether, after three years’ experience, “they” (the specious promises) “had ripened into reality.” Now, it has not been unfrequent for the self and arrogantly-styled “friends of British Industry” to assert, with the greatest coolness and disregard of accuracy, that this country has had a trial of free-trade during three years, which is a gross mis-statement, for the present

nominal duty upon corn came only into operation on the 1st of February, 1849, a year only, instead of three ; but, taking them at their word, it would be a great satisfaction to know whether the Hon. Chairman has, during the three past years, and especially at his last rent-day, only a few weeks since, returned or abated one shilling of his rent by reason of the inability of the tenant to pay ; and whether he offered, or was asked by his tenants, to abate their rents for the future ; and, if he has not done any of these things, about which there is not a single word throughout his speech, then he has amply proved that, during the period referred to so triumphantly as having falsified the promises of Mr. Cobden, his, the speaker's, assertion of such failure of realization, so far as he is concerned, is vain and worthless, and he has thus confuted himself ; and, so far, too, has actually confirmed the predictions of the slandered free-trade leader. Had such abatements of rent been made, the fact would have been industriously circulated and trumpeted in the public ear, to the credit of the landlord and the discredit of free-trade. Proceeding with his amusing sport at the expense of Mr. Cobden, which bore a striking resemblance to the exhibition of Punch in the streets, in which exaggerated and distorted caricatures are continually being stuck up and made to say all sorts of absurd incongruities, merely for the purpose of gratifying the enlightened assemblage by witnessing their imaginary discomfitures by the hard knocks of the exhibitor ; proceeding thus, the Chairman de-

lighted his admiring audience with a summary of all the threatened terrors to be dreaded from the adoption and continuance of free-trade, which was meant as a regular stunner upon the devoted pate of Mr. Cobden.—“After all,” continued the Chairman, “what was the real honest meaning of a general reduction of rents but a general reduction of profits—a general reduction of employment—a general lowering of wages—a general stagnation of the retail trade—the general ruin of the home market—an aggravation of the burdens of taxation—and an increase generally of poverty and poor’s rates?” which elicited “reiterated cheering” from the assemblage. In this tremendous catalogue of anticipated evils there is some ambiguity, whether they are to fall with equally stunning weight upon the trading, manufacturing, and commercial interests, as upon the agricultural. If it be intended to bear the more extended application, the reports from all the manufacturing towns and districts, without exception, are declaratory of increased and increasing activity and prosperity; and the returns of the exports and imports are highly corroborative of these portions of “British Industry” being fully competent to take care of themselves, without any other protection than that arising from the energetic and skilful management of capital, unfettered by the trammels of legal duties, erroneously regarded by some as fostering aids and protective supports. If such, too, be the application of the expressions, “general reduction of profits, and

general reduction of employment," the daily experience in the towns and districts referred to offers an almost unqualified contradiction to the assertion—for, though the diminution of price may have reduced the rate of profits as compared with periods long since past, yet the actual profit to the industrious and persevering may be, and are maintained, upon an increased amount, and more economically conducted trade, as shewn upon a fair average return of five or seven years. And with respect to the profits from agriculture, though the price of corn has been for many months low, too low to afford a profit to the growers, yet, what has been the average price during the past melancholy three years? why, upwards of 60s. per quarter, and for the past twenty, 56s.; and though there will, in the course of nature, be occasional fluctuations from year to year in the quantity grown, these extreme fluctuations in price, prejudicial to the farmer as well as to the consumer, cannot recur under a system of free-trade, as they were wont to do under the benign system of high duties. No just reason has ever yet been advanced to shew why the manufacture of food should be bolstered up by fictitious prices under legal enactments, any more than other species of manufacture, which are now, for the most part, exposed, as they ought to be, to the variations of supply and demand, and the profits dependent upon the ingenuity, the economy, and steady application to business,—and, above all, the care bestowed in regulating personal expenditure. This is, perhaps, in its neglect, a source of

a great part of the difficulties and distress with which the present age has had to contend ; and it has pervaded all classes, but especially those intervening between the extremes. The middle classes have been so much engrossed in the struggle after riches, and in vieing with each other in the indulgence in ease and luxury, in the attainment of which incessant and intense efforts have been, in many cases, used to the sacrifice, for the time being, of comfort, and ultimately of health and peace of mind ; and all have been scrambling up the tottering ladder of luxury and distinction, and to so giddy a height that many have suddenly fallen ; and down which it is apprehended all must make up their minds to descend some rounds, in order that they may escape the same unhappy fate. Let any one look attentively around, and strictly at home, and he will find abundant confirmation of the prevalence of chrysolatry, and the intense thirst after luxurious indulgence, which it is hard to give up, but must be abated, if not voluntarily, by compulsion, when the interests of the community demand the sacrifice ; and happy will they be who delay not in accommodating their wants and desires to their altered circumstances. Next, as to the apprehended “general lowering of wages.” Hitherto there has been no such general lowering in the trading and manufacturing districts, but in many cases even an advance has been made, and not an inconsiderable one ; and, amongst the agricultural labourers of our own neighbourhood, though there has been a reduc-

tion of the rate of wages for some weeks, or perhaps months, past, yet there is no want of employment, unusual at this season, and during the continuance of frost ; and the diminished rate of wages is by no means in proportion to the reduced cost of food and other necessaries ; so that it is asserted, and with ample means of proving the truth of the declaration, that the able agricultural labourer of this district was far better off in 1849, when food was cheap and wages lowered, than he was in 1848, when food was dear and wages higher, and still farther prosperous than in 1847, when food was dearest and wages at their highest price. And with respect to the alleged or anticipated increase of “poverty and poor’s-rates,” nothing can be more at variance with the truth than such an assertion ; and if gentlemen, who are really desirous of knowing and stating the truth, would only condescend to make enquiry into the facts from the proper sources of information, which are accessible to every one, they would avoid much self-deception and consequent misleading of others, who ignorantly swallow all that happens to be palatable to their passions and prejudices ; and they would in this case find that so far from poverty and poor’s-rates being on the increase in this neighbourhood, there is a very considerable decrease, as shewn by a comparison of the number of poor relieved, and of the amount expended in their relief during the half year ending September 29th, 1849, (the period of the last making up of the accounts), and the corresponding half-year of 1848, as in the following abstract :—

Amount of In-maintenance and Out-relief during the half years ending September 29th, in the Warwick Union.	1848.			1849.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
	5,338	19	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	4,716	12	6

Total number of persons relieved during the above periods, including Vagrants.	7,093	5,456
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Shewing a diminution in the number of 1,537, or upwards of 25 per cent. ; the average price of wheat during the three years having been not less than 60s. per quarter. Then, as to the remaining bugbears held up to terrify the timid agricultural mind, “a general stagnation of the retail trade, the general ruin of the home market,” and “an aggravation of the burdens of taxation ;” true, the retail trade may suffer a temporary depression during the uncertainty of prices, and during the vain and pernicious continuance of the agitation revived and sustained by those who would consult their own and the public interest far more did they employ the same degree of energy in encouraging their tenants to renewed exertions, and calming their doubts and fears, so as to strengthen their self-reliance, by coming forward in an open, manly, and sensible manner, as some of their class have already done publicly, and others privately, by the offer of new arrangements or modifications of their tenure, with the advancement of capital towards improvements under wise and liberal conditions. And, doubtless, “the home market,” in certain branches, and in particular localities, will, for a season, feel similar effects ; and the “aggravation of the burdens of taxation” will also press with unusual

weight for a time, shorter or longer, according to the willingness displayed by the powerful classes in putting their shoulder to the wheel of social advancement, which has been too long resisted in its progress by the impediment thrown in its way by the sluggish Protection. But for aristocratic lips to talk thus of the burdens of taxation, becomes, indeed, a most unkind cut, and would have sounded better from a radical or chartist—for by whom was all, or the chief part, of that enormous load of debt and taxation, under which the foundations of British Industry are staggering, accumulated, but by the landed interest? which then legislated, almost uncontrolled, in favour of their own immediate interests; and for the secondary purpose of supporting and extending opinions that a succeeding half century has, almost throughout civilized Europe, repudiated and trampled in the dust.

The Hon. Chairman concluded his exhibition of Mr. Cobden and his policy by referring, in terms of indignation, to that gentleman's declaration relating to the 12 millions of local taxation which are alleged to be borne by real property alone, which he considers a just burden, inasmuch as those charges have for centuries been borne by that description of property, and therefore have, with the charge of tithes, been inseparably fixed upon real property, which has been inherited and transferred by sale through so many generations, and is the only fixed, permanent, and indiminishable property, and, consequently,

the only safe security, for the payment of the just and inalienable claims in the maintenance of the poor. Other property, in money, merchandise, and machinery (of late years this latter has become liable to the poor's-rate) have not the same fixity of value, nor durability of nature, for they are perpetually undergoing fluctuation, and may at any time be converted into some other shape, and quickly transferred even to a distant country, in the event of unprofitable employment, or the risk of depreciation. But, however, should it appear, on a candid and careful investigation, that real property is, after the settlement of things under the new system, introduced by the policy of free-trade, subjected to burdens of greater amount than is just, let them in equity be distributed over other descriptions of income-yielding property in an equal, or in a proportionate rate ; but in a revision of this kind the strictest impartiality must be observed, and the immunities and exemptions at present enjoyed by real property, such as from legacy and probate duty, and also the greatly-advanced value of land in general, and, especially in particular localities, must not be lost sight of with respect to the re-adjustment of the land-tax. To attempt a re-valuation of real property at the present time would be premature, and attended by deceptive results, though there is but little indication of depreciation of value in the sale of land, or of its annual value in the reduction of rent. Having finished off Mr. Cobden to his own satisfaction, and that of his hearers, the Chairman proceeded to entertain the company with the

fashionable tirade against Sir Robert Peel and his letters to his tenantry, the chief recommendation in which, relating to the industrious employment of "skill, intelligence, and capital," to enable them to retain or improve their position, he, the Chairman, designated "as heartless as it was impossible to be carried out," a desponding opinion, in which it is trusted, indeed believed, few really coincide, and the truth of which must be left to time to test.

We next see both Cobden and Peel put up and knocked about most punchily, the former being designated an "impostor," and the latter the "eminent individual;" "the most sagacious statesman;" "the greatest living example of Parliamentary oratory;" and, a short time the scene, like a dissolving view, changes, and the same individual becomes, inferentially, a shallow dupe, who, "to carry out the plausible theories of Mr. Cobden, had broken up the great party of resistance to organic change from dangerous innovation, an evil not to be appreciated in the time in which we live." How the Chairman came to let that cat escape it is difficult to divine, but the warmth of his indignation appears to have suddenly raised the temperature of the bag, and out it bolted, to the amazement surely of the more prudent of his hearers. Thus we have exposed to view the "head and front of his offending;" the unforgiveable sin against the party; the crime of "the apostate" revealed in all its frightful enormity, the wound that no time can heal, and no application, not

even, perhaps, of an 8s. duty on corn, can mitigate the offence against the party. The breaking up of the great party, and the consequent loss of the chance of power, of place, and of influence, to that section of it which will admit of no compromise with anything so low as free-trade, no progress, nor accommodation to altered circumstances, but would rather waste their powers in useless efforts to force back the wheels of progressive advancement, is, perhaps, the bitterest ingredient in their cup of disappointment, which they blame their ex-leader for preparing, but which is rather to be referred to their blindness and obstinacy in not perceiving in time the course he was pursuing, when he intimated in Parliament that the accomplishment of free-trade was become a question of time. Having next subjected Lord Palmerston and the Government to the same ordeal, on account of their foreign policy, which appeared to be equally pleasing to the company, the Hon. Gentleman concluded his entertainment with a brief exhibition of Lord John Russell, for having deviated from the spirit of an alleged dictum of his own—that “no settlement of an important political question could be satisfactory where one great interest considered itself sacrificed to the other.” “On that principle of Lord John Russell,” he proceeded to say, “they” (the protectionists) “would take their stand.” The growth of every abuse, and the acquisition of monopoly, are gradual in their advances, and in like manner are they tenacious and difficult to remove, not unlike, in both

respects, to the ivy upon a wall, which, by its excessive growth, at length endangers the structure upon which it has tenaciously insinuated itself; and though in its detachment there may be some danger of displacing a few of the stones, yet the safety of the whole mass demands the removal, lest, in the event of some rude storm, all should be sacrificed. Every change, or proposal of change, is met by some objectors, who raise the cry of the sacrifice of some great interest. When the African slave trade was by law abolished, a great and powerful interest in the odious traffic in human blood was, to the scandal of the age, defended in Parliament, but it was sacrificed; and when the Reform Bill became law, and was incorporated, adding new life, in the British Constitution, a great and powerful interest, in an equally odious traffic in human liberty of voice and conscience, was also obstinately upheld, but was, with the majority of their rotten boroughs, likewise sacrificed; and, as to the satisfaction of the country upon each occasion, it is presumed few, if any, would now be found advocating the revival of the former traffic; and with respect to the latter, there seems to be a pretty general feeling in favour of the further amendment of the Reform Act by an extension of the franchise in some directions, and removing it in others—extending it to some large classes of intelligent and trusty citizens; and withdrawing it from some of the insignificant and corrupt boroughs which escaped schedule A of that Act; and which, having abused their privileges, should be compelled to forfeit them.

In the shorter speeches immediately following the lengthened address of the Chairman, nothing appears deserving of remark, with the exception of an important and altogether unlooked-for admission on the part of the Lord Lieutenant of the County, who declared "it was quite right that the minority should yield to the majority in all cases;" which reveals a tolerably satisfactory advance of liberal sentiment from one of a party which resolutely refused their recognition of such a democratic notion under the rotten-borough reign. But in the application of this wholesome doctrine his Lordship has fallen into an error, when he puts the significant question, "were they (the agriculturists) not the majority?" adding, too, "the farmers had the majority, and, by uniting, would be enabled to gain their object." The assertion of the farmers having the majority is so extravagantly wide of the truth, that it must be meant that their friends, connexions, and dependants, as the labourers are called, are included, and, perhaps, a large portion of the retail tradesmen in market towns are claimed to swell their numbers; with all these, however, the majority could not be reckoned, for the whole of them, saving and excepting the farmers themselves, have a direct beneficial interest in a reduced cost of living; and as to the labourers, if permitted, unterrified, unpunished, and not cajoled, they would, to a man, be in favour of cheap provisions and free-trade. An analysis of the occupations of the adult male population, taken in 1841, will clear up this point in a great de-

gree ; and, moreover, it must be recollected this is the tenth year since the last census, and that the increase, since the former, has been going on in at least the same ratio as for many years past, in favour of the trading and manufacturing classes. The following Table is an abstract from one in an excellent little work, entitled “The Statistical Companion,” by T. C. Banfield and C. R. Weld, 1848 :—

The powers of oratory of the Southern Division having been exhausted, it became the turn of the Northern "to give expression to the feelings," and who could be so properly or naturally called upon as mouth-pieces as the Members for that Division, who, versed in the art of debate and practised in declamation (not to say rant), have succeeded in acquiring a high reputation and much popularity amongst the farmers? Mr. Newdegate, as the senior representative, taking precedence of the venerable rejected of Birmingham, rose "under difficulties of no ordinary character, when he reflected what must be expected from one of their Members of the County, when they found what the gentlemen of Warwickshire were capable of, as illustrated by the talented speech of their respected Chairman;" and having succeeded in struggling with his diffidence during the delivery of this tolerably strong specimen of self-laudation of "our noble selves," and in preserving a grave and solemn deportment during the very trying scene, and also in maintaining presence of mind sufficient to restrain his mysterious cat from leaping out of the bag, by which accident unprevented his and his hearers' foes would be prematurely possessed of the tactics of their party about to be put in operation on the opening of Parliament. The Hon. Gentleman then selected some texts from speeches of certain American statesmen, to shew, in the first place, according to Mr. Van Buren, that "there was no greater thralldom to which a people could be subjected so fatal as a dependence on foreigners for the

food they eat.” Undoubtedly, if it be possible, it is the interest of every country to grow its own food, and in proportion to the increase of population, should the soil be made to yield a corresponding increased amount of produce ; an argument of the greatest weight in favour of redoubled exertion and perseverance in the improved cultivation of the land, rather than, according to protectionist principles, an indolent reliance upon high import duties to prop up the interests of the producers at the expence of the consumers ; but the Hon. Gentleman did not pursue the subject, and point out the course a people should adopt when they are, from any cause soever, not able to produce in their own country, in average harvests, food enough, by one-third, to supply themselves till the next harvest. The answer may be evaded or suppressed, but upon the principles of so-called “protection,” the people must eat one-third of the quantity they require, and pay one-third more for it. In the second place, we find it contended, on the authority of the Secretary to the Treasury of the United States, who says, “each country should, so far as it could, legitimately, and without oppression of its interests, be dependent upon itself for the supplies of all the prime necessities of life,” a sentiment almost identical in principle with the preceding, and which would, with its limitation and guarded reservation of “legitimately and without oppression of its interests,” be equally well received by the most zealous free-traders at Manchester or Leeds, as by the most exclusive protectionists at

Warwick ; and thirdly with General Taylor, now President of the United, but not unanimous, States, he agrees “that it was not only the right but the duty of the Government of their own country”—he, Mr. N., wished our Government felt it to be their duty, and acted up to it—“to give *due* and *legitimate* encouragement to the industry of the people over whom they ruled.” What a sentence wherewith to catch an English protectionist ! Why, with the transatlantic caution conveyed in the words “due and legitimate,” that vaunted passage might as safely be spoken or printed in Vienna as in New York, in Petersburg as in Manchester, and no Government in the world could hesitate to accept it as an expression of their duty on that head, however much they might differ as to the mode of carrying it out. It is, for example, the mode of the Austrian and Russian Governments to give “due and legitimate” encouragement to native industry in the active employment of the sword and musket, the bastinado and the knout, in checking the too rapid growth of free-trade and free opinions amongst their dependencies and neighbours, who are at this moment writhing under the protective chastisement of these tenderly-paternal Governments ; and it is their mode, a way they have, of encouraging the industry of their subjects, by excluding, as much as possible, all interchange with other nations, through the cherishing intervention of high import duties ; checking thus most effectually all exertion towards improvement, by cutting off all external competition ; so jealous are these miserable

despots of foreign intercourse, and in terror of the introduction of foreign arts, but especially of the art of self-government amongst their people ; whereas, on the contrary, it has become the policy of our Government to promote the cultivation of commercial and friendly intercourse with all other nations, by means of the advancement and extension of art and science, and their application to the industrial occupations of the people, in agriculture as well as in all the varied productions in manufacture, for which this country has been so long and so eminently distinguished, and in the free and universal distribution of all these, to the end that the happiness and welfare of all nations may be secured by the promotion of civilization and the peaceful intercourse of mankind.

Having indulged himself in a little innocent quizzing of “ the dilettanti professors ” of agriculture, and sneering at their efforts to promote improved cultivation, and thereby his own advantage, and which called forth the hearty haw, haw’s of the “ practical men ;” who, however, are occasionally detected making use of the “ schemes ” and “ new-fangled notions ” of the despised “ dilettanti ” with advantage to themselves, but without knowing or caring from whom they were derived, this “ farmer’s friend ” reminded his agricultural friends, the farmers themselves, and very unnecessarily, if not unkindly, of certain terms of reproach that had been from time to time applied to them by the “ dilettanti,” who, in the warmth of their zeal and impatience at the slowness of these

men to adopt anything new, had so expressed themselves. Having accomplished all this, the "farmer's friend" passed suddenly to the great subject, which, after years of the bitterest vituperative eloquence, has not even so far reconciled him to the hated apostasy of his former leader as to allow him to let the smallest opportunity escape of venting his ichor upon the Right Hon. Baronet; and accordingly the two letters were again subjected to the bitterest censure, which, after much vapouring and flourishing, amounted merely to this much, that in the offer of the 20 per cent. investment in improvements upon the farms, it was no more than what "many improving landlords of large properties had been doing for years and years past" (it is something to hear that landlords are improving) that he believed "the Right Hon. Baronet's rents were fully 10 per cent. higher than those of the adjoining land holders;" but he did not pretend to shew that any of the farms were vacant in consequence of the rents being too high, though he added, that he thought the much-maligned letters "were calculated to encourage, on the part of the landlords, a stern disregard of the position of his tenantry, oppressed as they were by free-trade; that it was an attempt to gain credit for consideration on his own part for his tenantry, which the terms and circumstances related did not justify." It does not appear, however, that landlords require much encouragement to hold tight to their rents, nor has it been made known, at least the writer has not heard of it, that the Hon. Gentleman has set the example in

this respect, with the view of relieving his tenantry, in the state of oppression to which, in common with others, according to his shewing, they are at present exposed ; and whether the Right Hon. Baronet is entitled to credit for originating the plan of investing the 20 per cent., or not, he will, at least, obtain credit for having spoken out in a decided, candid, unflinching manner, which has had the effect of inspiring confidence in the right direction, of self-reliance, not only amongst his own tenantry, but throughout the whole country.

Abandoning Sir Robert, the Hon. Member took up the second part of the old duet, and went through his performance upon Mr. Cobden, with as much taste as execution, eliciting cheers and laughter from the delighted audience, at least that portion that were awake, according to the changes from the grave to the comic parts. In conclusion, the Hon. Member addressed himself to the artizans ; but, as none of this class were present, it is not recorded with what effect or attention his observations were received. He described them as being in “ total ignorance of their real interests ;” which, considering how much has of late been addressed to them, both by free-traders, and also by protectionists, is about as complimentary to their understandings and powers of discrimination as the expressions said to have been applied by one of the “ dilettanti professors ” to the farmers, though conveyed in a larger number of, and more mildly-drawn, words, but bearing the same

interpretation. The Hon. Member evidently knows nothing of the feelings, nor of the interests, of the artizans, nor yet of their condition, at the present moment, or he would have discovered they are too much awake to their true interests not to perceive that, full employment, with, in many cases, advancing wages and moderate prices of provisions, and other necessities, which they are now, happily, after long privation, enjoying, are far better for them than precarious work, with diminished wages, and food at double the price. It is incomprehensible how gentlemen can wrap themselves so closely in prejudice, and take so little pains to become better informed upon subjects of such importance and general interest, as to give utterance to such inaccuracies and gross absurdities as appear in the preceding quotation, and also in the following : where he asks—"if the land were thrown out of cultivation by a rapid process, what would become of the labour it had employed ?"—a question so utterly irrelevant, and so inconceivably ridiculous in a landowner to suggest, as only to be paralleled by the enquired result which might be anticipated from the hypothetical falling of the sky ; unless it be a query as to the effect upon the prosperity of agriculture, from the arrival, "by a rapid process," at a true knowledge of their position and interest on the part of the landed interest. As no suitable reply to such a profound question could be imagined, and as in consequence the propounder received none, he succeeded for once in rendering himself unanswerable, and, flushed with his singular achievement, he

wound up his speech in terms of triumph at the anticipated result of the onslaught his party was about to make upon the free-traders, many of whose fallacious and "ruinous theories" had been "already exploded," and were fast vanishing before the revived and overwhelming movement of the protection forces! But we shall, in a few days, see whether all this bluster will look as big in St. Stephen's as in the Court House, at Warwick.

Next we find Mr. Spooner addressing the meeting, and, after a modest and diffident preamble as regarded himself and his powers of pleasing, and complimentary towards those who had preceded him, who had "left him nothing whatever to say," he took up his part in his usual solemn and lugubrious style, and contrived to prolong his discourse to about his customary extent, which, from his having been left with "nothing whatever to say," was consequently of about the strength and consistency of a kettle of Soyer-soup. "What was the object of the meeting?" enquired he, and to which he responded, "It was that those who had the honour of representing them in Parliament should give an account of their past conduct—at the same time that the Representatives had an opportunity afforded them of ascertaining the present opinions of their constituents, and of explaining to them the way in which they intended to carry those opinions out." It is evident the Hon. Gentleman fancied himself at Sutton, or Coleshill, or some place in the Northern Division,

and addressing his own constituents. And it is something novel and quite exhilarating to find one of his party so condescending and affable as to explain, or wish to explain, his parliamentary conduct to his constituents—a proceeding formerly reprobated as low—unworthy of a representative, un-English, unconstitutional, and only fit for a radical delegate to a democratic constituency composed of the unshaven and unwashed, as the “friends of British Industry” used ignominiously to describe the artizan class.

So it would appear the object of this meeting was to give Mr. Spooner the opportunity of repeating the speech delivered to his own constituents, which he accomplished somewhat awkwardly, by forgetting the *mutatis mutandis*.

After a series of difficult questions put to the ceiling, which returned them unanswered, and a vast expenditure in breath and energy, during which he seemed several times in imminent danger of breaking into the difficult and interminable subject of the monetary system, by seizing the *bul*-lion by the horns, he arrived at the astounding conclusion that “protection” was a misapplication of the word, and that “justice” should henceforth become the watchword of his party; for which the Hon. Gentleman deserves the especial thanks of all the advocates of free-trade—another word to which he objects, but which the free-traders will not so easily yield up. Justice! is the word. And in the name of all the millions who have

been so long demanding it, let him have it fully and freely; and as a reformed Parliament would distribute it, were the interests of the various classes more equally balanced in the representation, by a further extension of the franchise, agreeably with the dictates of that same virtue with which the Hon. Gentleman has suddenly become enamoured.

The Hon. Gentleman continued his denunciations of free-trade and free-traders, making emphatic ap-*Peels* about “the fatal measure”—“new-fangled doctrines”—and “foreign competition”—and indulging in the most dismal forebodings of impending ruin upon all the interests of the community, from the unrestricted introduction of food and manufactures, which seemed, in his excited imagination, to be about to fall upon this doomed country, not in a continuous stream, with which there might be a possibility of struggling, but in overwhelming successions of avalanches of agricultural and manufacturing produce; and at length succeeded in so exasperating himself, as to declare, that “if they were, as he believed every class would, to be brought down to one-half of their incomes, which he was quite sure was a *moderate calculation*, he, for one, would support every motion, the tendency of which would be to cut down the salaries of those who might be living on the taxes of the country.” “If they were to have cheap prices; if they were to have the ‘benefits’ of free-trade; if they were still to have that system of legislation which gave them a ‘large, large loaf,’

the meeting might rest assured that the friends of that system should have a small, small salary ;” in a word, the Hon. Member has nobly resolved to join the ranks of the financial reformers—at least, so far as the reduction of the salaries of the Government—a plain indication that he has abandoned all hope of seeing his own party luxuriating in the sweets of office. This would be very well, as far as it goes, did it but proceed from a right spirit and an enlarged view of the necessity of retrenchment demanded in the public expenditure ; but, as it stands, it savours too much of petty revenge, and a churlish resentment, under the disappointment of blighted expectations. After subjecting Mr. Cobden to the usual, and, by the crowd, looked-for evolutions, and expressing his astonishment that the House of Commons could “ be led by such a will-o’-the-wisp—(tremendous cheering)” —and after uttering his amazement, “ to find that men who called themselves statesmen—men who were descended from statesmen ” —(as though, according to his experience, wisdom had always been found hereditary)—“ men from whom they might have expected better things ! ” —(the climax of his agony is quite affecting)—“ that such men should be found thus pandering to the ignorance of the multitude, and enticing them on by an *apparent* cheap loaf ” (how awfully funny !) “ to their own ruin, without telling them that that cheap loaf would leave them without the means of purchasing it.” How touching is this picture of the lamentable ignorance of the multitude ! and how tender and paternal the

concern of the Hon. Gentleman for the poor deluded creatures, who, forsooth, have not sense enough to know whether they are *paying for and eating* a big and cheap, or a little and dear loaf, but are unwittingly enticed by an apparent unsubstantial filmy apparition of a loaf, not a jolly four-pounder for fourpence, such as they are in reality enjoying, and long may they have it, at or near the same price, notwithstanding the horror of the ex-member for Birmingham at the realization of the “big loaf,” and money to spare, for the honest and industrious workman !

From the top of the “big loaf” the Hon. Member leaped to the Colonies, which he complained were not represented in the House of Commons ; so that he may be expected, bye-and-bye, to come out in the character of a Parliamentary as well as of a financial reformer.

Having settled the affairs of the Colonies by previously unsettling the government of them, he sang a part of Rule Britannia, with much effect ; but the cheers of the meeting were mingled with moans for the loss of the Navigation Laws, which had, as he observed, been so useful as nurse-maids to our navy (but which, having been used up in the service, are now shelved and done for), forgetting the humane and gentle impressment-laws ; and how reluctant the sucking-seamen have always been to leave the nursery for the attractions of the soft music of the boat-swain’s whistle, and the lively companionship of the cat.

From the Navy the Hon. gentleman was taking his departure, when, by an unlucky move, he fell upon the *bul*-lion, tied up in the Bank of England, and, knowing his *theoretical* antipathy to gold in the form of coin, his transparent predilection for paper, and his general and innocent enthusiasm upon these subjects, his hearers prudently abstained from urging him on by much cheering, as may be perceived in the printed report of this part of his speech, which contains only an occasional “hear, hear,” but nothing of a more encouraging tendency, and which seemed to have the effect of bringing his lucubrations to an unexpected conclusion ; for, on the escape of something about the “ruin of the country” from his lips, which, being a pleasant topic, elicited a burst of cheers, the Hon. Member appeared suddenly to awake to a sense of the position in which he had been so long standing, that he feared “he had trespassed too long upon their attention,” which was flatly contradicted by several “No, no’s,” and the Hon. Gentleman “shut up.”

After some minor murmurings, the meeting quietly dispersed, having, apparently, enjoyed itself very much ; but not being quite satisfied with its prowess, there seemed to be a pretty general feeling in favour of a suggestion thrown out, which was supported by the chair, for holding a public meeting, in the event of Parliament remaining obstinate and deaf to the eloquence and arguments just exhibited : then “they would speak out and be attended to”—for the voices of the two hundred and

twenty, packed so closely in the Court House, at Warwick, would, when liberated from those walls, and swelled by the accession of a few score more, resound through the land like the roaring of the British lion, to the dismay and discomfiture of the trembling free-traders.

On reviewing the proceedings considered in the foregoing observations, and examining closely the objects held by the party, as they appear in the speeches of the chief performers, as well as glancing at the topics only incidentally alluded to, and those carefully kept out of view, it is pretty clear the anti-free-trade movement is in a great measure the stalking-horse covertly made use of for purposes other than those avowed under the delusive title of "Protection to British Industry"—a title already damaged by the handling it has received, and a few months more of wear and tear in Parliament, and out of it, will make it so threadbare that none but the blind will be further deceived by it. It is a remarkable and curious fact, that throughout the whole of the speeches delivered, both greater and lesser, no allusion was made to the exertions of the great leader of the band—not even was the name of D'Israeli, so illustrious in the cause, once mentioned by any of his ungrateful followers. What can be the meaning of this solemn silence, this marked neglect? Is it that he has in his person given to the world a practical refutation of all the arguments of his party—a death-blow to all the assertions and awful protesta-

tions of the certain destruction of the landed-interest, and all connected with it, by the establishment of free-trade, which, say they, has now been blighting the prosperity of the country for three long years ; yet, within the period of protection receiving its doom, the Honourable Member for Bucks has invested upwards of £30,000 in land ? He has been charged with having raised the rents upon that estate in the face of “ certain destruction ;” but how nobly did he rebut the offensive charge !—and how disdainfully did he repel the mercenary insinuation !—and how successfully, nay triumphantly, did he assert his consistency and disinterested virtue !—it was an “ unmitigated fabrication,”—“ there was no farm in his possession the rent of which *he* had raised !” Can it be possible that the leader of the patriotic-protection-to-British-Industry-band has endeavoured to avail himself of a mean quibble, such as a vendor of shining oranges or glittering pen-knives in the streets would scarcely deign to use, that *he* had not raised the rents because it had been done by another in his stead ? The fact in which all persons are concerned to know is, whether the rents have been raised by any one during the time, no matter who served the notices, or by whose orders ; but it is interesting to find the Honourable Gentleman himself accidentally concerned in, and, it is hoped, benefitted by, the transaction ; though it would be much more sentimental to behold him flinging the dross into the dirty ditches of Buckinghamshire, without striving or desiring to see one shilling of it returned ; but

merely that he might have a stake upon which to lean in toiling for the restoration of the prosperous days of high prices under protective duties. But the indisputable fact is, when *unprotected* by quibble or evasion, that the rents have been raised, and by such an amount as the tenants do not choose to pay, and, consequently, are about to quit their farms, under the notices served by the former proprietor, or his agent, but with the cognizance of Mr. D'Israeli, previous to his purchase of the estate.

Another fact connected with the late demonstration at Warwick is deserving of notice—the utter absence of any argument to disprove the position of the free-traders respecting the capability of greatly-increased production, in this country, of food of all kinds, by the general application of those improvements in culture, now known to, and practised by, the few who are in advance of the majority of their fellow-cultivators in every county; to say nothing of what is being done by a still smaller number of the yet more advanced, who are paving the way for further improvements; nor to lay much stress upon what may be reasonably looked for in time to come from the intelligent and economical application of continually-advancing art and science. On such matters the harangues were as utterly barren as on any other argument bearing upon the general question. Each orator, in succession, seemed to vie with his predecessor in acrimonious abuse of Cobden and Peel, and sneers at “the dilettanti Professors,” and

appeared to content themselves with having discharged their duty when they had given vent to the overflowing ichor with which they were oppressed. Take away the three fertile topics—Cobden, and Peel, and the “dilettanti,” and the remainder becomes mere “leather and prunella.” Try the experiment upon the speech of a Mr. Bodington, who appears to be one of the unteachable “practical men,” at the end of the proceedings, in which you will find him, in the drollest way, affecting to feel affronted in his own person, and on behalf of the tenant farmers, endeavouring to express a “feeling prevailing universally” amongst them, against “that set of men who employed themselves in insulting, and pretending to teach, the agriculturists their business; he alluded to Messrs. Buckland, Huxtable, and Co.—a feeling which was one of contempt for them and their many absurdities!!” Such an observation as that must, if uttered upon the authority of the tenant farmers generally, surely, in the judgment of all educated and sensible men, go very far in justification of the hard words attributed to Mr. Cobden, in reference to the intelligence and capability of that class. The “contempt” of this worthy is like the contempt of the dull and ignorant school-boy towards the schoolmaster, and the whole race of schoolmasters, who have the audacity to attempt to instruct him, or such as he. Agriculture is an ancient art long since brought to perfection, and he had made himself master of it in his youth; there was nothing more to be learnt, and if any

dared to insult him, by presuming to offer him instruction, why, he would denounce him as deserving of contempt ! Proceed with the speech, and you will find it all Cobden, Peel, denunciation, and contempt, with the exception of a choice bit of pot-valiant eloquence after this fashion. His imagination, heated by some cause, apparently loyalty towards his Queen and Country, he beheld Mr. Cobden at the head of the Leeds Invincibles, charging the Agricultural Redoubtables, and exclaimed, "He thought it was as well to let these braggarts (the Leeds Invincibles) know who and what the farmers were under these circumstances ; and he (Mr. Bodington) would tell Mr. Cobden that the farmers, although scattered over the country, were, nevertheless, united, to a man, in sentiment, and had the will to assemble at any time when the enemies of the country rendered it necessary for them to stand forth in support of the Constitution and Crown" (it used to be Crown and Constitution) ; "and he would add, the farmers were 200,000 strong, every man a practised horseman and a sure marksman." Tremble in your boots, Mr. Cobden, and all the free-traders and financial-reformers, at this terrible announcement of preparation for battle on the part of the two-hundred thousand *strong*, notwithstanding the universal depression and distress amongst their ranks ; every man of whom is "a practised horseman," and keeps a perfect hunter solely for practice ; and a "sure marksman," with his double Manton, over the best brace of pointers in England. An

attentive examination of the proceedings of numerous other meetings, having similar objects in view, plainly intimate a want of unanimity as to the means that should be adopted for the benefit of the farmers ; who, though confessedly as a body, are not yet in the deplorable position some would represent them, are, however, under great apprehension of impending severe loss, if not, in many cases, of certain ruin, in the event of no material advance in prices coming speedily to their relief. But whether they should look to Parliament for a re-enactment of duties—to their landlords for reduction of rent—or to themselves for an increased production, and a diminished cost, by a more skilful, diligent, and economical system of cultivation, as direct and immediate aids ; or to less direct sources of help, through a reduction of general taxation, by the enforcement of a reduced expenditure of the public revenue ; or through a re-distribution of the local burdens. Of relief from the first of these sources, it is not believed the great body of farmers entertain any expectation ; and from the second, there does not seem to be much more anticipated, excepting under certain circumstances of leases entered into under high rents, which probably are not very numerous ; but be that as it may, the raising or lowering of the rents must accrue from those causes which affect other values, supply and demand ; and will become, in each case, a matter of arrangement between landlord and tenant, and upon terms as fluctuating as the variety of soil, condition, situation, contiguity to good markets,

and other circumstances. To the latter, then, of the direct and immediate sources will they, as it is believed many are already doing, chiefly look for aid—to that manly and honourable perseverance, and patient self-reliance, for which British Industry is so deservedly distinguished ; at the same time seeking a just alleviation of the public burdens, by urging upon a willing Government the necessity of such an economical expenditure as may be consistent with the safety and dignity of the nation ; a Government that regards the cultivation of peace and of friendly international communication, through the encouragement of commerce and the peaceful arts, as one of their highest aims ; affording, at the same time, the best security and protection against external war, or internal discord ; and also the best means of promoting the true interests of the human race, in conformity with the dictates of nature and the commands of the Supreme Creator.

In days not very long passed, there proceeded from a few individuals occasional complaints of “the burdens of taxation,” which were sometimes swelled into louder murmurs from assemblages of the people, not so reasonable and peaceable as now, and which were haughtily rebuked by the dominant and domineering party then glorying in the name of Tory, now modified by the more ambiguous term Conservative ; and not only were they rebuked and rejected as discontented, disaffected, and dangerous to the State, but were repressed and put down by

the strong arm of the law, and by the still stronger arm of the military, wielded by the arrogance and intolerance of political power. But, oh ! how circumstances have changed, and with them the opinions of men, and the proceedings of political parties, since the days when it was not safe to speak disrespectfully of a minister, or of the party to which he belonged ; and when they who asked for relief from taxation were suspected, and reprov'd with scorn and indignation, in the spirit, if not in the words, “ ye are idle, ye are idle ; go, therefore, now, and work ; ” and, instead of relief, additional taxes were laid upon them. But now, how changed the scene, the persons, and the action ! the former task and tax-making party, who laid the burdens thick and heavy upon the nation, and were deaf to its cries for relief—who lived and batten'd upon the taxes, wrung from an over-burdened and oppressed people — that same party now thinks it no dishonour to cry out for “ protection ” and “ relief from taxation,” now that the burden has been but slightly shifted upon their own shoulders.

To attempt to point out in detail the mode by which fresh capital should be applied to the cultivation of the soil would be beyond the object of these remarks, and, for the most part, beyond the power of the writer ; but that such can and will be raised and applied to that end, is as certain as that industrious and actively-employed hands, producing, simultaneously, hungry stomachs and full purses, create a

demand for food, which must be supplied from some source ; and which will naturally be the nearest, because it will be, if “unprotected,” the cheapest.

There is one point which has not been sufficiently considered in all its bearings during this great discussion, viz., the extent to which it has become the immediate interest of every one as consumers, (notwithstanding their being at the same time producers,) in continuing the free-trade policy as regards the supply of the primary articles of food. Of course, this will vary amongst different classes. The landowners and farmers have at present an apparent direct interest in high prices ; but both are apt to forget, or make too little allowance for their direct interest also in low prices, in reference to their domestic expenditure, not only in food, but in all the necessities, comforts, and luxuries of life ; and also in the reduced cost of production, by reason of the diminished price of labour, stock, implements, and all other requisites. But a great, perhaps the great, obstacle to a steady and cheerful determination to work out their own improvement of position and prospect, on the part of the food-producing class, is the uncertainty and apprehension about prices prevailing amongst them ; and which are sustained and excited by their superiors for their own private and political purposes ; and much valuable time and opportunity becomes lost, and the power of meeting the crisis thereby diminished ; and many, it is feared, will be sacrificed through delay in endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the change.

On the Condition and Treatment of the Agricultural-labouring Class.

In addition to the foregoing remarks, the writer is impelled by a strong desire to offer to the public generally, but more particularly to the proprietors of the soil, a few observations upon the relative position of the food-producing classes, including landlords, tenants, and labourers; principally with the view of correcting some errors in the treatment of the latter by the former, by which their mutual interests have been most materially injured; and originating apparently in a misconception of their intimately-connected relation; and, in offering these observations, it is hoped the parties, for whose interest they are made, will not regard them as presumptuous or intrusive upon matters which, some may think, should be held as strictly private; but, in consequence of their neglect, and the rapid and extensively-diffused growth of abuses and mistaken policy, have really become subjects of public injury.

With many noble and eminent exceptions, there prevails, amongst the landowners, a lamentable amount of ignorance of the habits, feelings, wants,

and general moral and social condition of their more humble dependants—proceeding chiefly from the extreme distance at which they are placed with respect to each other—which is occasioned partly by external causes, and partly by totally different habits, feelings, and occupations of both mind and body ; but mainly through the custom of the higher classes to neglect, and to despise that kind of education, and those habits of business, which would enable them, if not entirely, to manage their own estates and general affairs ; or at least to know whether, when committed to the care of others, they are conducted economically and honestly towards themselves, and equitably and humanely towards that humble class, upon whose labour the profitable results to those by whom they are employed depend.

How numerous are the examples of estates impoverished, and families ruined, through the wasteful extravagance of the owners, and their ignorance of the value and management of their property ; which has been entrusted, perhaps, to an ignorant, incompetent, and dishonest agent, but with cunning and shrewdness enough to enrich himself at the expence of his employer ; and in such cases, it rarely happens that the tenants are otherwise than poor, the land ill-cultivated, the buildings neglected, and the labourers reduced to the extremity of hardship, poverty, and misery. It not unfrequently happens that the care of estates of large extent, and of varied quality of soil, and other circumstances, ren-

dering their management complex and difficult, is left to agents but little qualified, by education and special instruction, to do justice to their employers, in determining the value, and maintaining or increasing it, or to undertake the discretionary direction and superintendence of a tenantry, or the judicious and careful treatment of the peasantry.

The superintendence of a tenantry is rather one of mere business, and an agent might be well qualified to undertake that ; but the care of the peasantry should be regarded, as in some cases it is, as a charge of a far higher nature, and involving a responsibility commensurate with the power to direct and do good on the one side, and the feebleness and inability to do more than strive and struggle for a bare subsistence on the other. The hired agent cannot feel the same deep moral responsibility that the proprietor does, or should do, for the dependent class ; and many a pitiable case that would have moved the master with compassion has been heard in vain by the heedless or obdurate servant.

If proprietors would but give to their sons some degree of education, specially directed to a knowledge of the nature and management of rural affairs (in an extended signification), if not exactly with the intent that the heir, on his succession, should altogether manage his own concerns—which in many cases are too extensive and complicated for one, or or even more, to conduct—yet that he might do so to

such an extent as to be an effectual check upon imposition, and a safe-guard against incompetency on the part of his agents ; and, at the same time, enable him to extend his knowledge of the interests of his humblest neighbours ; and thus enlarge his sympathies, and extend his powers of exercising benevolence and practical beneficial influence, towards all within his immediate control and protection.

Facilities for the acquisition of elementary and practical instruction, in all that concern agriculture, are now offered in various parts of the country, as at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester—an institution not so well known and appreciated as it deserves—at which an extensive and sound elementary course of education is combined with practical information derived from the cultivation of a farm of about 700 acres, under the superintendence and management of men highly qualified in each department ; and to which the attention of landowners must, sooner or later, become directed, not only for the instruction of their sons, but also for that of the class from which their agents are derived, when they have thoroughly been awakened to the importance of such a system of education, and its bearings upon their own immediate interests.

Intercourse sufficient for an acquaintance with the general condition of their principal tenantry is not so uncommon amongst landlords as that which affords a correct knowledge of the like circumstances of the

class beneath them ; and though the employment of an agent or steward saves the employer much trouble and annoyance, and spares him much importunity, and much that is painful or revolting to his finer sensibilities, still the responsibility cannot be evaded, but, perhaps, is increased, if the discharge of the duties of property, which are as sacredly and inseparably attached thereto as the rights, be unnecessarily delegated to another ; since, by such an attempted rejection and delegation, a greater amount of injustice and hardship may be inflicted upon the deserted and defenceless.

Much has, of late years, been spoken and written upon this vital subject ; and some amendment, in the treatment of the rural poor, is here and there visible ; but there remains much more to be done ; and even, in the first instance, in convincing proprietors of the existence of wrongs and sufferings accumulated under their very eyes, to an extent, at first sight, almost incredible.

How frequent are the complaints of the benevolent of their want of success in imparting even the lowest amount of instruction to the children of this class ; and how bitterly do they repine over their disappointed hopes and expectations of awakening in these young minds a lively and lasting sense of their moral and religious obligations. Such results, unhappily the fruit of so much misapplied benevolence, are, for the most part, the necessary effects of causes

of a physical nature, which are within the power of the owners of the land to remove, or, at least, to a very great extent ameliorate; and it is vain to expect the seeds of moral and religious advancement to grow and bear fruit, under circumstances so utterly adverse, in a soil so neglected and soured by ill-treatment.

In order to explain this more clearly, it will be well to consider what are the essential requirements for the improvement of this class, and how far these are found to correspond with their present condition; and then to enter upon the suggestions for their amelioration.

In the first place, then, the labourer must have a habitation; and it ought to be, in all cases, sufficiently commodious to lodge a family of different ages and of both sexes, so that decency of habits and modesty of demeanour may be preserved, without which correctness of conduct cannot be maintained; it ought, too, to be constructed so as to afford due shelter from the inclemency of the weather, and effectual exclusion of damp; and, at the same time, with due regard to the facility of admitting fresh air and light; with easy access to an abundant supply of pure water; with drainage, and other conveniences, in and about the house, for the proper preservation of cleanliness, and the consequent health and comfort of the inmates; and, moreover, the dwelling should be situated at a convenient distance from the place of

the labourer's daily employment. So far from the possession of these requisites are the dwellings of the rural poor, that scarcely a parish, in any district, can be found, in which the majority are not deficient in some, or all of them. How frequently may be observed the wretched hovel, consisting of two spaces (mis-named rooms), one for occupation by night, the other, when the family is not small, made use of both by day and night; enclosed within tottering walls, and covered by a dilapidated roof, insufficient to exclude the rain and the wind; the air * and light almost refused entrance through the dull, diminutive mockery of a window, which, contracted as its dimensions may be, is frequently still further reduced by rags and paper, in place of the broken panes; the floor low, damp, and in holes, inconvenient and dangerous, presenting a rude but instructive surface for the exercise of the children in acquiring the habit of struggling with the dangers and difficulties of life; the walls stained, and reeking with the offensive moisture transmitted from the sty, or other foul accumulations of disease-engendering matter; the air tainted, and unwholesome therefrom; a scanty supply of water, and the entire absence of drainage; and the whole habitation filthy and disgusting, and the inmates dirty, unhealthy, dejected, and miserable.

* In anticipation of any objection to this passage, in consequence of its being stated that the wind is not sufficiently excluded, and immediately afterwards that the air is excluded entrance, it is as well to remind the reader that the exclusion of the wind through the walls and roof is demanded for warmth, especially during the night; but the controllable admission of air is equally demanded for ventilation during the day, for the preservation of health, by the removal of that air which has unavoidably been tainted and rendered unwholesome.

Such a description is far from overdrawn, and, unhappily, far from inapplicable to numerous humanities in many parishes in this and other districts. In such a dwelling, into which the proprietor would scarcely hazard the lives of any of the animals kept for his luxury and amusement—certainly not his horse,—how can he, if ever he reflects upon the circumstance, be surprised to find improvidence, vice, poverty, and crime, in rapid succession, hurrying the victims to premature, and, perhaps, ignominious death; or spreading desolation and misery more protracted, and not less fatal, and, may be, in more pitiable forms of wretchedness; entailing, too, heavy, but, for the most part, avoidable, expence upon those from whom the law compels a maintenance, either in abject poverty as paupers, or in those nurseries of vice and crime, the common gaols, in the vain endeavour to repress, by a mockery of punishment, those vices and crimes which have been engendered and fostered by adverse circumstances, rather than through the culpability of the victims themselves.

To talk about education, to prate about the example of the higher class, and to preach about the irreligion of a people in such a case, are but mocking insults upon their wretchedness; and an exposure of ignorance of the causes, or indifference to their results, on the part of those who have suffered them to remain in helpless endurance and unmitigated suffering. Under severe privation and physical depression, their

minds will, of necessity, be occupied in combatting with their trials ; so as to leave but little time to be bestowed upon matters, of which neither their previous education nor present inclinations render them susceptible of the advantages to be derived to their children ; and it is found that, unless diligently looked after, and even almost bribed by other more material benefits accompanying the proffered instruction, they will scarcely avail themselves of it. And when they do accept it, how little progress is made, particularly by the boys, who, at the age when they might begin to feel the benefits of instruction, and take an interest therein, are sent to work in the fields ; soon forgetting the little they had acquired, and becoming gradually insensible to their loss, and indifferent to the opportunity of further voluntary attempts at mental improvement at their leisure.

It is said there is no encouragement to build or repair cottages, much less to build them upon an improved scale, inasmuch as they are looked upon as unprofitable property—tending to increase the poor, and, consequently, the poor's-rates—and promoting poaching and other idle and disorderly habits.

Now, cottages may be, and are being, built on an enlarged scale and improved construction, such as will accomplish the objects desired—the protection of health, the defence of the morals, the promotion of the comfort, happiness, and independence, or

rather self-dependence of the inhabitants, and at a reasonable outlay, securing to the proprietor a moderate return upon his capital so expended. The actual cost will, of course, vary according to local circumstances affecting the price of the materials of brick, stone, and timber, and the cost of carriage of such materials as are to be brought from a distance. However, by taking advantage of the improvements, of late years effected, in the plan and mode of construction, as well as the reduced cost of materials, cottages, as well as other houses, can now be erected at a very much less cost than formerly; and it is found by the experience of the Duke of Bedford, who has devoted much attention to this deeply-important subject, (an account of which, and with some details explanatory of the mode in which his Grace's noble example upon the Woburn estate, has been, and is being, carried out, has been printed for private distribution by the Rev. C. H. Hartshorne,) that cottages of this class may be built so as to return "about 3 per cent. upon the outlay" in erecting (exclusive of the site.) The concluding paragraphs of the Rev. gentleman's account will shew a scale of accommodation and rent, and also point out the motives of the proprietor, and the results to the occupiers. "The terms under which the tenants are bound are dictated by good sense, and a spirit of equity, which brings me to the rent, which is the last, and, certainly, it is one of the most difficult to adjust, since it should neither be too high to be oppressive, nor too low to compromise the independence of a workman, who

will thus be degraded to the state of an idle pensioner or a worthless mendicant. The rents vary from a shilling to sixteenpence a-week, according as the houses possess one, two, or three bed rooms. Some of the latter are of an extra size, to accommodate a large family, and reach eighteenpence a-week. Being let under reasonable agreements, the occupiers are contented and happy, and the noble proprietor, aiming at no ideal perfection, nor exacting an exorbitant payment, as is too commonly the case when houses are run up by contract, must, certainly, thus far, and the work is still proceeding, have the satisfaction of feeling that his anxious efforts to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry on his estates have been rewarded by success, and acknowledged by gratitude."

Such being the efforts to ameliorate the condition of the rural poor in Bedfordshire, and with such happy results, there is no reason why, on the application of similar efforts, similar results should not be obtained in Warwickshire, or any other county in which intelligent, humane, and willing proprietors are to be found. But is this great and fundamental question to be resolved solely upon grounds of pecuniary profit? It is as much the duty of the proprietor to find a fitting habitation for the labourer and his family, as it is for the higher class of tenant, the farmer, even if it should not bring in one shilling of profit or interest in return; but it will be his care, if possible, to avoid loss in the performance of his duty

to all parties, including himself—for it can easily be shown that, in respect to the lower grade of duty to self, this will be attained, both in a direct, as well as in an indirect, process, upon the full and the faithful performance of the higher obligation—which brings us to the consideration of the next point, viz., that the dwelling should be situated at a convenient distance from the place of the labourer's daily employment. The necessity of such a condition will occur to every impartial person, and the desirability will be admitted even by those who pursue a policy in direct opposition to it, the cause of which policy is very briefly comprehended in "the necessity of keeping down the rates;" and, accordingly, the houses are neglected and suffered to decay, or they are pulled down, and the occupants expelled and driven to the nearest "open parish," in violation of every principle of justice and humanity. A moment's reflection will show the hardship towards the labourer in driving him to an unreasonable distance from his work, often 3 and 4 miles, and sometimes even more; and the impossibility of his rendering a full return of labour for his wages, except at the sacrifice of his strength and health through the additional toil exacted from him in going to and from the scene of his labours, is obvious; to say nothing of the violence done to his feelings in thus rudely tearing him from his home, which, by an English labourer, is as tenderly and dearly loved as by the highest in the land.

The imperious necessity of keeping down the rates and sustaining the rent demand it ; but does it diminish the rates ? Certainly not ; in the broad view of the matter, it is, at best, but a transfer from one parish to another, or, as the case may be, to the common fund of the Union ; and further, it would not be difficult to demonstrate, not only that all this tyrannical injustice is not merely a transfer of the burden, which is bad enough, but that it is attended by an actual increase in the expence, as regards rates, in wasted health, and untimely exhaustion of the strength, of the labourer, who must, in his decrepitude, be supported ; and whose family must be sustained out of the rates, until they are able to maintain themselves. But when and how often does it happen that a pauper family succeeds in maintaining themselves—their self-dependence and self-respect having once been broken down into pauperism ? Thus we find that the consequences of this mistaken and fatal policy are not only deeply disastrous to the poor, but injurious and expensive to the rich ; and the short-sighted and unfeeling intentions, in attempting thus to wring the rates out of the bones and muscles of the labouring class, become so far defeated, that the private and parochial pecuniary advantage, screwed out of them by cruelty and injustice, is converted into a public grievance and a general wrong.

They who have it in their power, and especially they who, seeing it, do not strive to remove so great, so destructive an oppression as this, must surely be

insensible to the magnitude and depth of the responsibility attached to their position, and regardless of the commands and revealed will of God in reference to the rights of the poor, and the obligations of the rich in maintaining and defending them, when it is declared by Him in the words of the Psalmist—"I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor ; and again, in the powerful language of Isaiah—"The spoil of the poor is in your houses—what mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor !" No language can convey more forcibly the indignation of the Almighty at the cruelty and oppression of the poor by the rich, let it proceed from whatever cause it may ; or be it exhibited in any form or mode, it cannot escape from the meaning and application of these words.

It requires no great degree of penetration to discern, amongst this deeply-injured class, an estrangement of feeling, and a sensible diminution of respectful attachment towards their employers and superiors ; and, instead of a cheerful and contented bearing, there is too frequently a sullen dogged demeanour ; so inconsistent with that mutual good understanding and kindly intercourse which should be established and cherished between them, and which may be confidently looked for, and will be willingly reciprocated, by the many, when under the benign influence of a kind and judicious treatment.

If it be too much to expect a voluntary abandonment of this system of exclusion and extirpation, which is utterly inconsistent with an improved cultivation of the land—which demands the application of an increased number of hands—and which, in some scattered and more favoured spots, is already being successfully applied ; then every effort should be used to arouse the Legislature to a deep sense of the wrongs sustained by the community, and strenuously to demand that remedy which at present seems alone capable of removing, or materially mitigating, them. The abolition of the Law of Settlement—which would counteract the selfish and mistaken policy of parochial exclusion, and would enable the honest and industrious to seek, unopposed and unsuspected by overseers, or jealous rate-payers, the market most favourable to their profitable employment. Let, then, the labouring poor have but a fair chance given to them, according to the principles herein asserted as their right, and, at the same time, proved to be the interest of their employers and natural protectors to bestow upon them, and a change will soon be visible in their condition and conduct, demonstrating a sound and durable advance in moral improvement ; and rendering more practicable such further attempts as may be made in their behalf, towards a better and more enlarged instruction of a moral, religious, and general nature ; thereby affording the best security for their future good conduct, and introducing a reciprocal respect and esteem, which will promote their mutual well-being and happiness.

When such becomes the general aim and object of the landowners, it will cheerfully, but not till then, be conceded that they have a just and correct notion of these “duties of property ;” and that they have the interests of the agricultural-labouring poor really at heart ; and then, but not till then, will that which is now a mere hollow, deceptive party watchword, become an honest and an honourable expression of the hearty and sincere aspirations of all good men—“Protection to British Industry.”